

Message Text

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SP-02 SS-15 EA-10 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 OMB-01
TRSE-00 HA-05 EB-08 ARA-10 /119 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3251
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
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LONDON PASS AMBASSADOR TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, MBFR, SALT, PEPR, US, US
SUBJECT: PRAVDA EDITORIAL ON U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS

SUMMARY. LENGTHY, UNSIGNED EDITORIAL ON PAGE FOUR OF PRAVDA FOR JUNE 17 REPRESENTS SOVIET LEADERSHIP'S RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S ANNAPOLIS SPEECH AND SOVIET LEADERSHIP'S ASSESSMENT OF PRESENT STATE OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. EDITORIAL'S BASIC POINTS: ANTI-DETENTE FORCES IN U.S. ARE GAINING UPPER HAND; THIS IS EVIDENT IN RECENT U.S. WORDS AS WELL AS DEEDS (IN AFRICA, IN BILATERAL RELATIONS, IN ARMS CONTROL AND MILITARY SPENDING); SOVIET UNION IS ABSOLUTELY BLAMELESS, THEREFORE REASONS FOR THIS SHIFT IN U.S. POLICY ARE TO BE FOUND WITHIN U.S. (FRENZIED PORT-VLADIVOSTOK EFFORTS OF ANTI-DETENTE FORCES, ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, PLUS ATTEMPTS TO MAKE A TACTICAL SHIFT TO "TOUGHNESS" IN POLICY TOWARD THE USSR); FOR ITS PART, THE SOVIET UNION WILL STAY ON THE HIGH ROAD OF DETENTE AND ARMS CONTROL, IT AFFIRMS ITS DESIRE TO DEVELOP GOOD MUTUALLY-BENEFICIAL RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. "IF THE U.S. ALSO WANTS THIS"; MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, THE PRESENT COURSE OF THE U.S. IS "FRAUGHT WITH SERIOUS DANGERS", AND "ONE HOPES THAT THIS TRUTH WILL QUICKLY BE UNDERSTOOD IN WASHINGTON." WHILE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER BRZEZINSKI IS CHARGED WITH "CRUDENESS" IN DISCUSSING U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS, EDITORIAL STOPS SHORT OF CRITICIZING PRESIDENT PERSONALLY EDITORIAL ALSO STOPS SHORT OF THREATENING COUNTER-MEASURES TO "HARDER" U.S. POLICY TOWARD SOVIET UNION
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ALTHOUGH STATEMENT IS MADE THAT SOVIET UNION WILL NOT ALLOW VIOLATION OF PRINCIPLE OF BALANCED AND EQUAL SECURITY. END SUMMARY.

1. OVERVIEW. DEPARTMENT WILL HAVE SEEN TEXT OF JUNE 17 PRAVDA EDITORIAL "ON THE PRESENT COURSE OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT," WHICH WAS CARRIED IN FULL ON THE TASS ENGLISH WIRE BEGINNING AT ABOUT 11:00 P.M. MOSCOW TIME JUNE 16. OVERALL, THE EDITORIAL (PRINTED ON PAGE FOUR OF PRAVDA) REPRESENTS THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP'S CONSIDERED RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S ANNAPOLIS SPEECH AS WELL AS SOVIET LEADERSHIP'S ANALYSIS OF CURRENT STATE OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP. THE PIECE'S TONE IS RESOLUTE AND AT TIMES CONDESCENDING; ITS PREDICTABLE PREMISE IS THAT SINCE THE SOVIET UNION HAS DONE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO JUSTIFY A HARDER U.S. LINE, THE ENTIRE BLAME FOR THIS DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENT LIES WITH THE U.S.

2. WITH RESPECT TO SOVIET POLICY, THE EDITORIAL REITERATE THE USSR'S DETERMINATION TO WORK FOR RELAXATION OF INTERNATIONAL TENSION AND FOR DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD, MUTUALLY-BENEFICIAL RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., "IF THE U.S.

ALSO WANTS THIS." THE PIECE CONCLUDES WITH GRATUITOUS
ADVICE FOR THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION: THE PRESIDENT'S
STATED AIMS OF STRENGTHENING PEACE, LIMITING ARMS AND
NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION CANNOT BE
ATTAINED WHILE AN ANTI-SOVIET HYSTERIA IS BEING WHIPPED
UP, WHILE EXTERNAL, INTERNAL AND EVEN PERSONAL PROBLEMS
ARE ADDRESSED BY MEANS OF ATTACKS ON THE USSR.

3. THE EDITORIAL WARNS THAT THE PRESENT COURSE OF THE
U.S. IS "FRAUGHT WITH SERIOUS DANGERS" BUT DOES NOT
SPELL OUT THE NATURE OF THESE "DANGERS", OTHER THAN TO
STATE THAT THE SOVIET UNION WILL NOT ALLOW THE U.S. TO
VIOLATE THE EARLIER-AGREED PRINCIPLE OF "EQUALITY AND
EQUAL SECURITY" IN DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS. IT ENDS
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WITH THE PIOUS HOPE "FOR SPEEDY REALIZATION OF THIS
TRUTH IN WASHINGTON".

4. SPECIFICS. THE FOLLOWING ASPECT OF THE EDITORIAL
STRIKE US AS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY:

-- AS EVIDENCE OF "DANGEROUS CHANGES" IN U.S. POLICY,
THE EDITORIAL CLAIMS THE U.S. HAS UNDERTAKEN LONG-TERM
EXPANSION OF ITS MILITARY POWER WHILE "DELIBERATELY
SLOWING DOWN" SALT NEGOTIATIONS, ITS ATTEMPTS TO INTER-
FERE IN SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS ARE "UNCEASING", IT HAS
UNILATERALLY RESTRICTED BILATERAL CONTACTS, ENEMIES OF
IMPROVED U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS (I.E., NATIONAL SECURITY
ADVISER BRZEZINSKI) SEEK COMMON LANGUAGE WITH ANTI-
SOVIET LEADERS OF THE PRC, AND THE U.S. HAS BECOME THE
"MAIN INSPIRER OF NEW COLONIALISM IN AFRICA";

-- REGARDING THE PRESIDENT'S ANNAPOLIS SPEECH, THE
EDITORIAL PORTRAYS IT AS AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO
CLARIFY U.S. POLICY, PARTICULARLY IN THE AFTERMATH OF
CONFUSION CAUSED BY BRZEZINSKI'S "CRUDE" PUBLIC STATE-
MENTS; THE SPEECH FAILED BECAUSE IT TRIED TO COMBINE
INCOMPATIBLE ELEMENTS, NAMELY, ATTACKS ON THE SOVIET
UNION AND CALLS FOR AN IMPROVED BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP;
ON BALANCE, THE SPEECH INCREASED SOVIET DOUBTS ABOUT
CURRENT U.S. POLICY; THE SPEECH MADE CLEAR THAT THE
PRESENT U.S. ADMINISTRATION "IS TRYING TO DEPART FROM
THE PRINCIPLES OF RELATIONS" EARLIER WORKED OUT WITH
THE SOVIET SIDE;

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-- REGARDING CAUSES FOR THE DANGEROUS TURN IN U.S. POLICY, THE EDITORIAL CITES THE LAST-DITCH EFFORTS OF A COALITION OF ENEMIES OF DETENTE (THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, THE EXTREME RIGHT, EMIGRE ORGANIZATIONS) WHO PLAY UPON ATTITUDES FORMED DURING THE COLD WAR; ALSO CITED ARE U.S. DOMESTIC ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AS WELL AS A TENDENCY BY SOME POLITICIANS TO PROVE THEIR "TOUGHNESS" TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION;

-- SPECIFIC ARMS NEGOTIATIONS. AFTER LABELLING THE ATTITUDE TOWARD ARMS TALKS AS "ACID TEST" FOR THE EXPRESSION OF THE GENUINE INTENTIONS OF THE SIDES, THE ARTICLE PROCEEDS TO A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE WEST'S -- ESPECIALLY THE U.S. -- BEHAVIOR IN MDRF, SALT AND CAT.

A. MBFR. ARTICLE SEES THE MAY NATO COUNCIL DELIBERATIONS AS PREEMPTING THE EAST'S "BIG STEP" FORWARD ON JUNE 8. ARTICLE ASKS RHETORICALLY WHY WEST HAS NEVER ACCEPTED THE LONG STANDING PROPOSAL OF THE EAST FOR A FREEZE ON EXISTING FORCE LEVELS.

B. SALT. GROMYKO'S "SPECIFIC, CONSTRUCTIVE" PROPOSALS TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY ARE EXAMPLES OF MOSCOW'S POLICY OF DOING ALL DEPENDENT ON IT TO REACH SUCCESSFUL AGREEMENT. THIS IS CONTRASTED TO UNWILLINGNESS OF U.S. LEADERSHIP TO DISCUSS REMAINING QUESTIONS IN A CONCRETE WAY. ARTICLE CLAIMS THAT U.S.G. HAS ITSELF DONE LITTLE TO PREPARE CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION FOR OVERCOMING OPPOSITION TO SALT RATIFICATION AND, IN FACT, STATEMENTS BY MANY GOVERNMENT FIGURES ABOUT SOVIET MILITARY THREAT WORSEN THIS ATMOSPHERE.

C. CAT. CAT COMMENTS ARE PREFACED WITH SKIMPY REFERENCE TO "ARTIFICIAL COMPLICATIONS" IN OTHER TALKS AND TO CONTINUATION OF LINE (DESPITE OFFICIAL DENIALS) ON
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LINKAGE. CAT TALKS THEMSELVES ARE SEEN AS COVERING WITH DISCUSSION ACTUAL U.S. POLICY OF ARMS SALES.

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-- AFRICA. LITTLE IS ADDED THAT HAS NOT BEEN STANDARD SOVIET MEDIA FARE FOR WEEKS. ZAIRE EVENTS ARE USED AS EXAMPLE OF U.S. LED ATTEMPT TO USE "MYTH" OF "SOVIET THREAT" AND "SOVIET-CUBAN INTERFERENCE" TO MOBILIZE COLLECTIVE EFFORTS IN AFRICA TO PROTECT ECONOMIC INTERESTS AND SUPPRESS NATIONAL-LIBERATION STRUGGLE. SOVIET-CUBAN PRESENCE IN SHABA PROVINCE IS DENIED. SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ANGOLA AND ETHIOPIA HOWEVER ARE DEFENDED ON VARIOUS GROUNDS. THREAT TO ETHIOPIA IS DESCRIBED IN RATHER STRONG TERMS (DISMEMBERMENT OR EVEN ELIMINATION AS INDEPENDENT STATE). LENGTHY AFRICA SECTIONS CONCLUDES THAT IF U.S. SPENT A PORTION OF THE EFFORT IT DEVOTES TO THE "MYTH" OF THE SOVIET-CUBAN THREAT ON REACHING A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF RHODESIA, NAMIBIA, AND SOUTH AFRICA, THE AFRICAN CONTINENT WOULD BE RELIEVED OF POVERTY AND BLOODSHED.

-- CHINA ANGLE. ARTICLE RESERVES SOME OF ITS STRONGEST LANGUAGE FOR DISCUSSION OF U.S. ATTEMPT TO PLAY ITS "CHINA CARD". SUCH U.S. "PETTY INTRIGUES" IN NO WAY SERVE TO STRENGTHEN U.S.-SOVIET TRUST, SAYS ARTICLE, ADDING THAT WHILE U.S. LEADERS HAVE IN THE PAST SHOWN CAUTION IN THIS REGARD, SOME WELL PLACED FIGURES IN WASHINGTON (READ BRZEZINSKI) "FILLED WITH ANTI-SOVIET EMOTIONS" HAVE THROWN THIS TRADITIONAL CAUTION TO THE WINDS. ARTICLE OMINOUSLY AND IN STRONGEST LANGUAGE WE HAVE SEEN ON U.S.-PRC RELATIONSHIP, NOTES THAT FORMING A BLOC WITH PRC ON AN ANTI-SOVIET BASIS WOULD PRECLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATION WITH THE SOVIET

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UNION IN REDUCING THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WAR AND LIMITING ARMAMENTS. PRC LEADERS ARE PLAYING THEIR OWN GAME, REMINDS THE ARTICLE, AND THEIR INTERESTS ARE TO EXACERBATE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. U.S.-SOVIET CONFRONTATION - "AND EVEN BETTER, WAR" - IS DREAM OF PEKING, SAYS ARTICLE, CONCLUDING WITH HOPE THAT WASHINGTON WILL PONDER ON THIS THEME UNHURRIEDLY AND COOLLY.

5. COMMENT: DESPITE THE PUGNACIOUS TONE OF MUCH OF ITS ARGUMENTATION, THE PRAVDA ARTICLE IS OVERWHELMINGLY DEFENSIVE IN THRUST. WHILE NOT GIVING AN INCH IN RESPONSE TO U.S. CONCERNS, IT COMES DOWN HEAVILY ON THE NEED TO CONTINUE THE DETENTE PROCESS -- BUT ONLY ON SOVIET TERMS. THE ARTICLE OBVIOUSLY EXPRESSES A FELT NEED TO REAFFIRM -- BOTH FOR DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AUDIENCES -- THE OSTENSIBLE SOVIET COMMITMENT TO ARMS REDUCTION AND IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. WE CAN THUS INFER THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP FEELS BADLY

STRUNG BY THE GROWING CRITICISM OF ITS ACTIONS AND
POLICIES IN A NUMBER OF AREAS.

6. WHILE THE ARTICLE GIVES NO INDICATION, EVEN INDIRECT,
THAT THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP MIGHT CONSIDER ANY ALTER-
ATION IN ITS POLICY, IT AVOIDS SPECIFIC THREATS AND IN FACT
LEAVES THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP CONSIDERABLE ROOM FOR MANEUVER
ON CONCRETE ISSUES IF IT SHOULD SO CHOOSE IN THE FUTURE.

7. WE NOTE THAT THE ARTICLE OMITTS ANY MENTION OF U.S.
POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND ALSO SAYS NOTHING ABOUT
BILATERAL ISSUES WHICH HAVE RECEIVED MUCH PRESS ATTEN-
TION RECENTLY SUCH AS ALLEGED CIA PLOTS, ARRESTS OF
SOVIET CITIZENS, AND THE LIKE. THE MIDDLE EAST PROBABLY
RECEIVES NO ATTENTION BECAUSE IT WAS NOT A TOPIC IN THE
PRESIDENT'S ANNAPOLIS SPEECH AND THE SOVIETS CHOSE NOT
TO INITIATE FURTHER POLEMICS ON THIS ISSUE. THE
BILATERAL ISSUES WERE PRESUMABLY IGNORED BECAUSE THESE
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ARE NOT SEEN BY THE SOVIETS AS IMPINGING ON THE LARGER
ISSUES OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS. MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, SALT (ARMS CONTROL)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOSCOW14041
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
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Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780647/aaaabovw.tel
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Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION ACDA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 9
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2308894
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRAVDA EDITORIAL ON U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS SUMMARY. LENGTHY, UNSIGNED EDITORIAL ON PAGE FOUR OF PRAVDA FOR JUNE 17 REPRESENTS SOVIET LEADERSHIP'S
TAGS: PARM, PEPR, SOPN, UR, US, MBFR
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vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8815c486-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014